AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 23, line 11, as follows:

Therefore, in contrast to RBCS 500, ICS system 600 provides for the long-term storage of ID Tags 204 and corresponding POSTNET codes 202, which allows for the automation of tasks previously required to be performed by human operators. In addition, ICS system 600 provides for the sharing of this information throughout all phases of the identification and processing of mailpiece 100. This capability is made possible by Primary Identification Code Server/Secondary Identification Code Server (PICS/SICS) system 622. As described below, PICS/SICS system 622 enables downstream mailpiece identification and processing based on ID Tag 204, even if POSTNET code 202 becomes illegible. As in RBCS 500, after mailpiece 100 is processed by ISS 602 and OSS 604 in ICS system 600, initial mail processing is complete. Thereafter, mailpiece 100 is processed as in RBCS 500, as [[a]]described above.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 35, line 3, as follows:

Figure 15A is a diagram of one embodiment of a plurality of Primary Identification Code Servers operating in national mode. As in local mode, in which a PICS shares mailpiece identification information with one or more SICS and one or more PICS (see Figure 13), in national mode, a PICS additionally shares mailpiece identification with other PICS via one or more Electronic Post Offices (EPOs). As shown in Figure 15A, a plurality of PICS 1505 are connected to a plurality of EPOs 1503. ~~1502.~~ In one

implementation, PICS 1511, ~~1510,~~ PICS 1512, ~~1511,~~ and PICS 1513 ~~1512~~ are connected to ICS Electronic Post Office West 1504, ICS Electronic Post Office Central 1506, and ICS Electronic Post Office East 1508 via a network (not shown). Any number of PICS can be connected to any number of EPOs. This national mode implementation allows for broad interoperability among an unlimited number of PICS and EPOs. For example, as shown in Figure 15A, PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ may receive identification files for all mailpieces processed by all PICS in an ICS system 600. By allowing PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ to communicate with one or more of EPOs 1504, 1506, and 1508, the identification files for mailpieces bound for areas served by PICS 1512 ~~1511~~ and PICS 1513 ~~1512~~ are also sent from PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ to PICS 1512 ~~1511~~ and PICS 1513. ~~1512.~~ Therefore, national mode allows for complete interoperability among all the components of an ICS system 600.

Figure 15B illustrates one embodiment of a process by which the sharing of mailpiece identification files takes place in national mode, as shown in Figure 15A. As shown in Figure 15B, in national mode, PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ collects identification files in Lookup Table 1521, ~~1512,~~ as described above. PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ then determines which of the identification files in Lookup Table 1521 ~~1512~~ are served by other PICS/SICS systems using a Local.Sat file 1522, ~~1514,~~ as described above. PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ maintains an EPO.Sat file 1523 ~~1513~~ to define what records are to be sent to other PICS via EPOs. In one embodiment, Local.Sat file 1522 ~~1514~~ can contain a list of all ZIP codes served by PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ (as well as any SICS connected to PICS 1511). ~~1510).~~ In this embodiment, EPO.Sat file 1523 ~~1513~~ can be the inverse of

Local.Sat file 1522. ~~1514.~~ PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ can have a National Mode indicator 1514. ~~1511.~~ In national mode, PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ periodically sends these identification files to a primary EPO 1520 via a network connection (not depicted). PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ also sends a copy of Local.Sat file 1522 ~~1514~~ to primary EPO 1520. Local.Sat file 1522 ~~1514~~ contains a list of all the ZIP codes served by PICS 1511. ~~1510.~~ In one implementation, PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ may also have a secondary EPO for use in case primary EPO 1520 is unavailable or inoperative (not shown).

Once PICS 1511 ~~1510~~ has transferred the identification files to EPO 1520, EPO 1520 collects and stores the identification files in a Storage Buffer 1517. ~~1514.~~ EPO 1520 also collects and stores any Local.Sat files 1522 ~~1514~~ in a plurality of Table Buffers 1516. Each PICS table 1518 in PICS Table Buffer 1516 is created using the Local.Sat files received from the plurality of PICS operating in national mode, such as, PICS 1511. ~~1510.~~ For example, when EPO 1520 receives Local.Sat file 1522 ~~1514~~ from PICS 1511, ~~1510,~~ EPO 1520 creates a PICS Table 1518 corresponding to PICS 1511. ~~1510.~~ Thereafter, in an implementation based on ZIP codes, as EPO 1520 receives identification files from other PICS, EPO 1520 stores the identification files matching the ZIP codes in PICS Table Buffer 1516 in the corresponding PICS Table for each respective PICS (e.g., if the ZIP code matches the ZIP codes in PICS Table 1518 corresponding to Local.Sat file 1522, ~~1514,~~ the identification file is matched to PICS Table 1518). At predetermined intervals (similar to the predetermined intervals described above), EPO 1520 then sends a copy of each PICS Table in PICS Table Buffer 1516 to its corresponding PICS. For example, if EPO 1520 collects identification

files corresponding to PICS 1530 into a PICS Table 1519, EPO 1520 may send PICS table 1519 to PICS 1530. Additionally EPO 1520 may also send a copy of National.Sat file 1515 to PICS 1530. National.Sat file 1515 is a compilation of all Local Sat files received by EPO 1520. National Sat file 1518 can be used by EPO 1520 to monitor all areas serviced by ICS system 600. If a copy is transferred from EPO 1520 to PICS 1530, National Sat file 1518 can also be used by PICS 1530 to monitor all areas that are served by ICS system 600.

E. Common Sorter Software

As described above, as shown in Figures 12 and 13, both PICS and SICS exchange information with Bar Code Sorters (BCS). For example, PICS 1200 in Figure 13 exchanges information with a plurality of BCS 1302, and a plurality of SICS 1304 exchange information with a plurality of BCS 1305. ~~1306.~~ Throughout ICS system 600, different types of BCS are used to read identification information from a mailpiece and process the mailpiece through a PICS or a SICS. Accordingly, using the same example from Figure 13, a common sorter software is needed to allow PICS 1200 and SICS 1304 to exchange information with BCS 1302 and BCS 1305, ~~1306,~~ respectively.